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"Looking into the orb of light he [Plato] sees nothing, but he is warmed and elevated." -- Jowett

No writer has made for the concept of goodness loftier claims than Plato makes for the Form of the Good in the middle books of the Republic. We are told that without knowledge of the Form of the Good we cannot know that anything else is good, and that without knowledge of this Form all other knowledge would be of no benefit to us (505A-506B). Further, the Form of the Good is "the cause" of truth and knowledge. Further yet, the objects of knowledge receive "their being and essence" from the Form of the Good though it is not essence "but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power." (509AB) As if this intriguing views were not paradoxical enough, Plato has Socrates suggest that even the foundations of mathematics are insecure unless we have knowledge of the Good: the beginnings of geometry and arithmetic are hypotheses, not known until the soul can "ascent" from them to the Form of the Good and "descent" back from it to them. (509B-511C)

These dark sayings are not incidental to Plato's philosophy. On the contrary they are the centerpiece of canonical Platonism, Plato's ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics of the middle period. The Form of the Good is given the privileged position: it is prior, ethically, epistemologically, and ontologically, to everything else in Plato's universe. Nor is this view confined to the Republic. I believe that an excellent case can be made out that the teleological explanation of the Phaedo (pp 97-99) and the "creation" of the physical universe in the Timaeus (pp. 28-35) presuppose this priority of the Form of the Good.

Why did Plato assign such a supreme position to the Form of the Good? What conception of goodness did he have which allowed him to think of the Form of the Good not only as the final cause of everything we do but also "the cause" of the knowability and even of the very being of his favorite entities, the Forms? And what connection did he see between the Form of the Good and mathematics?

As might well be expected, a considerable body of literature has been built around the relevant passages. It would take a long book to discuss adequately the interpretations put forward in this century alone. Yet it is no hyperbole to say that we have no satisfactory or widely accepted answers to our questions. A group of earlier writers, very substantial Platonic scholars indeed, discussed the relevant texts at length, but unfortunately they did not have the benefit of the excellent discussions of Plato's metaphysics that have taken place in the last quarter century.² A second group of very recent writers that have discussed our texts, acute philosophers indeed, do not seem

to me to have paid close enough attention to Plato's texts, and, probably as a result, their discussions do not illuminate a great deal what Plato says.³ In this paper I propose to re-examine closely what Plato actually says with the hope of making some progress: I think it can be shown that what Plato says about the Form of the Good is coherent and coheres well with what is now known of his metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. I am heavily indebted to a third group of writers who, so far as I know, have not written directly on our passages but who have thrown a flood of light on Plato's thought and have made distinctions of direct relevance to the privileged position of the Form of the Good.⁴

I divide Plato's discussion into three rounds, or, as they may well be called, three waves of paradox, and discuss each in turn.

I

The First Round: Ethics, Politics, and the Form of the Good

Plato's discussion of the Form of the Good occurs in a section of Book VI which is concerned with the education of the rulers (500ff). We are told that it is not sufficient for the rulers to learn what justice, temperance, courage, and wisdom are, according to the definitions established in Book IV. These definitions do not provide a sufficient and exact understanding of these virtues. There is something greater than these virtues, and there is a "longer way" to understanding these things, a way that culminates in "the greatest study":

- G1 The greatest study is the study of the Form of the Good, by participation in which just things and all the rest become useful and beneficial. (505A)
- G2 If we do not know the Form of the Good, then even if without such knowledge we know everything else, it (the knowledge of everything else) would be of no benefit to us, just as no possession would be (of benefit) without possession of the Good. (505AB)
- G3 If we know all things without knowing the Good, (this would be of no benefit because) we would not know (that) anything (is) beautiful and good. (505B)

Next Plato rejects two hypotheses concerning the nature of the Good: (a) The good is knowledge, and (b) the Good is pleasure. The first hypothesis is rejected on the ground that those who hold it are unable to answer the question "Knowledge of what?" except by saying "Knowledge of the Good", thus ending up with the circular and uninformative definition that the Good is knowledge of the Good. The second hypothesis is rejected on the ground that those who hold it admit that there are bad pleasures, and are thus compelled

to admit that the same things (bad pleasures) are both good and bad (presumably a contradiction). Thus:

- G4 The Good is not (identical with) knowledge or pleasure.
(505BCD)

Plato concludes this round by asserting two propositions about good things and the Good and by emphasizing the importance of knowledge of the Good for the rulers:

- G5 Many people prefer what appears to be just and honorable but is not, but no one prefers to pursue or possess what appears good but is not. (505DE)⁵
- G6 The Good every soul pursues and does everything for its sake divining what it is and yet baffled and not having an adequate apprehension of its nature nor a stable opinion about it as it has about other things, and because of this failing to have any benefit from other things. (505E)
- G7 Our constitution will not be perfectly ordered unless the rulers know how just and honorable things are good and they will not know this unless they know the Good. (506AB)

This round is the least paradoxical of the three and the easiest to understand in the general setting of Plato's theory of Forms and his ethics. The main metaphysical and epistemological assertions that Plato makes here about the Form of the Good are simply instances of his general metaphysics and epistemology. Thus the second part of G1 is simply an instance of a general proposition that Plato holds, namely:

- F1 It is by virtue of participation in the Form F-ness or the F that anything which is F is F.⁶

And G3 is an instance of the general epistemological proposition that goes together with the theory of Forms, namely:

- F2 If we do not know F-ness or the F, we do not know that anything is F.⁷

Thus G3 and the second part of G1 do not assign to the Form of the Good any privileged position over other Forms. On the other hand, the first part of G1 (and perhaps G2 and G7) does assign to the study of the Good a privileged position over all other studies and to the knowledge of the Good over all other knowledge. But this privileged position, so far, can be accounted for and understood by reference to G6, another standard Socratic and Platonic ethical view. If all our actions, pursuits, and undertakings are for the sake of the Good, then knowledge of the Good would indeed seem to be the most important knowledge we can have: for without it we would never know that anything for the sake of which we did anything else was good (by G3). We would

be like archers who lived for the sake of hitting their targets but could never see them clearly and, what is worse, could never know whether what they hit were their targets! Can we imagine anything more frustrating or less satisfying? Had Plato's assertions about the Good stopped here, his position would have been only mildly paradoxical and not all that different from Aristotle's; and the paradox and the difference would derive from his application of F1 and F2 to the case of goodness. We might say that the conjunction of G1, G3 and G6 assigns an ethical or practical priority to the study of the Good, and this priority might well have been thought sufficient for the paradox of the Philosopher-King.

II

The Second Round: The Epistemological and Ontological Priority of the Form of the Good

The second round is a wave of paradox indeed: Plato seems to assign to the Form of the Good an ontological and epistemological priority over all other Forms. The round (506B-509C) begins when Socrates is challenged to say what the Form of the Good is, if it is not knowledge or pleasure. Socrates implies that he does not know what the Form of the Good is, and when asked to give at least his opinion he proposes to let go for the moment the question about the nature of the Good and to speak of "the offspring of the Good which is most like it." He now prepares the ground for the simile of the Sun by first making the usual Platonic distinction between good things and beautiful things, objects of vision but not thought, on the one hand, and the Good itself and the Beautiful itself, objects of thought but not vision, on the other. In the case of vision and visible things a man may have the power of vision and a thing may be visible but there may be no actual vision (seeing) if a third element is not present, namely, light which is provided by the chief of the heavenly divinities, the Sun, "whose light makes the faculty of sight see best and visible things to be seen." (508A) Socrates now states and elaborates the simile as follows:

- G8 As the Good is in the intelligible region to reason and to the objects of reason, so is the Sun in the visible world to vision and the objects of vision. (508C)
- G9 The Sun (by its light) gives the objects of sight their visibility and the faculty of sight its vision; similarly, the Form of the Good gives the objects of reason their truth and to reason its knowledge of them. (508B, 508DE)
- G10 The Sun is the cause of light and vision, and light and vision are sunlike but not identical with the Sun; similarly, the Form of the Good is the cause of truth and knowledge, and truth and knowledge are like the Form of the Good but they are not identical with it. (509A)

G11 The Sun not only furnishes the visibles the power of visibility but also provides for their generation and growth and nurture, though it is not itself generation; similarly, the objects of knowledge receive not only their being known from the presence of the Good, but also their being and essence (reality) comes from it, though the Good is not essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power. (509B, Shorey tr.)

In Shorey's translation, Plato's next two lines read:

And Glaucon very ludicrously said, "Heaven save us, hyperbole can no further go."

As Socrates' reluctance and Glaucon's response indicate, the second round is far more difficult to understand and interpret than the first. Let us start by distinguishing sharply between the two rounds. The first round deals with relations between the Form of the Good and anything that is good whether a Form or a sensible thing. But the second round deals with relations between the Form of the Good and Forms only: between the Form of the Good and objects of knowledge or thought, i.e., Forms. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that it is the attributes of the Forms qua Forms or their ideal attributes that is being explained or accounted for by reference to the Form of the Good; not their proper attributes, i.e., the attributes that each Form has by virtue of being the particular Form it is.⁸ This is an important clue in understanding and interpreting the second round, and we shall return to it shortly. The second important difference between the two rounds is that while the first round assigns an ethical or practical priority to the study of the Form of the Good over every other study, the second round assigns ontological and epistemological priorities to the Form of the Good over every other Form. And it is precisely these latter priorities that have to be understood.

Essentially, the second round contains three distinct but related assertions: (1) The Form of the Good is "the cause" of the knowability of the Forms; (2) the Form of the Good is "the cause" of reason's actually knowing the Forms; and (3) the Form of the Good is "the cause" of the "being and essence (reality)" of the Forms. Let us consider (1) and (3) together. We have a chance, I think, to understand these two assertions if we can answer the following three questions: Q1 What constitutes the being and essence of the Forms? Q2 What is the relation between the being and essence of the Forms and their knowability? Q3 Given an answer to Q1, how can we understand the Form of the Good so as to make sense of Plato's view that it is "the cause", in some appropriate Platonic sense of "cause", of the being and essence of the Forms?

The context of the second round, the distinction between ideal and proper attributes, and Professor Vlastos' recent studies of Plato's doctrine of degrees of reality⁹ make it possible, I think, to give a fairly confident answer to our first question (Q1). In a series of passages in the middle Dialogues Plato contrasts Forms with the sensibles that participate in them; in these contrasts, systematically studied by Vlastos, Plato brings into relief a number of attributes which Forms have but which the sensibles that participate

in them do not have. These attributes -- which we may provisionally call ideal attributes of the Forms -- constitute the being and essence of the Forms. Moreover -- to skip for a moment to our second question (Q2) -- it is precisely these attributes that make possible the knowability of the Forms or the Forms' being "cognitively reliable", in Vlastos' phrase; so that if we can understand how the Form of the Good is "the cause" of the ideal attributes, we will also be able to understand how it is "the cause" of the Forms' knowability. Let us take a brief look at these contrasts.

In the Symp. 211AB Plato says that unlike the many beautiful (sensible) things that participate in it, Beauty itself always exists, it is neither generated nor destroyed, it does not increase or decrease, and exists by itself. Moreover, in contrast to sensible beautiful things, Beauty itself is not beautiful in one respect (or part) and ugly in another, nor beautiful at one time and not another, nor beautiful by comparison to one thing and ugly by comparison to another, nor beautiful here and ugly there being beautiful for some and ugly for others. Let us refer to the two sets of attributes of the Form Beauty listed (or implied) in the above two sentences as "I1" and "I2" ("I" for "Ideal attributes") respectively. Now in the Rep. Bk. V Plato tells us several times (477A, 478D, 478E, 479A-C) that the objects of knowledge, the Forms, "are" whereas the objects of belief, the sensibles that participate in Forms, "both are and are not." Professor Vlastos has argued convincingly, I think, that it is not existence that is being asserted here of the Forms (and asserted and denied of sensibles), but rather perfection or complete reality; and this in turn is to be interpreted in terms of our second set of the ideal attributes (I2) listed in the Rep. To say of the Form Circle (or Justice) that it "is" whereas a sensible circle "is and is not" is to say that the Form Circle is always circular (just), is circular (just) in all respects or parts, is circular (just) no matter what it is compared to, and is circular (just) to all who apprehend it no matter from where; whereas a sensible circle (a just man) is sometimes circular (just) and sometimes not, and so on. As Vlastos points out, Plato himself expands the "is and is not" formula in some of these ways at 479A-C for the cases of beautiful things, just things, pious things, doubles, halves, great and small things, light and heavy.¹⁰ In all these contrasts Plato surely intends to bring into relief "the being and essence (reality)" of the Forms, and he does it in terms of our ideal attributes I1 and I2. Moreover, in the Rep. Bk. V, sensibles are unknowable and can be only objects of belief precisely because they lack the ideal attributes of the Forms;¹¹ and this supports our answer to our second question, Q2, that it is the ideal attributes of the Forms that make possible the knowability of the Forms. In sum, and in answers to Q1 and Q2, the being and essence (reality) of the Forms consists of their ideal attributes (I1 and I2), and an object must have these to be knowable.

Let us now go to our third and more difficult question (Q3), assuming the answers that we just gave to Q1 and Q2. Let us first tackle part of Q3: in what sense of "cause" can we plausibly suppose that the Form of the Good is the cause of the ideal attributes (being and essence) of the Forms? In the case of the Sun and sensible things, the Sun is presumably the (an) efficient cause of their generation and growth and nurture (as well as their visibility). But there is no generation and growth and nurture in the case of the Forms, nor are the

Forms probably ever conceived by Plato as efficient causes.¹² In all probability formal causation is meant via the relation of participation. If so, then the Form of the Good is the cause of the ideal attributes of the other Forms in the sense that

G11.1 It is by virtue of participating in the Form of the Good that all the other Forms have their ideal attributes.

This is our interpretation of the relevant part of G11.

We are now within sight of an answer to the more difficult part of Q3, the part concerning the nature of the Form of the Good. For it seems to follow from G11.1 and the distinction between proper and ideal attributes that

G12 The ideal attributes of all the Forms other than the Form of the Good are proper attributes of the Form of the Good.

A host of questions now face us. I will list and discuss them in an order that may help us answer them. Q4 Why should Plato think that the Form of the Good, rather than some other Form or no Form at all, is the formal cause of the ideal attributes of all the other Forms? Q5 Did Plato conflate reality and goodness, as the joining of the present interpretation with Vlastos' interpretation of the doctrine of degrees of reality would seem to imply? Q6 What is the distinction between ideal and proper attributes, and did Plato make or at least observe it so that we are justified in attributing G12 to him on the basis of it? Q7 How is the goodness of sensible objects to be accounted for on the present interpretation? These are large and difficult questions and I can only hope to indicate in outline what I think are the right answers.

We can begin to see a connection between goodness and the ideal attributes of the Forms if we assume one of Plato's standard ways of conceiving the Forms in the middle dialogues, that is, if we think of the Forms not as properties but as ideal exemplars complete with non-Pauline self-predication.¹³ On this assumption, each Form is the best object of its kind there is or can be. The Form Circle, for example, is the best circle there is or can be, the Form Justice the best (most) just thing there is or can be. Now Plato thinks, I believe, that it is by virtue of its ideal attributes that each Form (other than the Form of the Good) is the best object of its kind. Let us take the examples of Circle and Justice, a mathematical and an ethical Form, and try to see this connection with each of the four ideal attributes I2. It is the ideal attribute of being circular in every respect or part of itself that makes the Form circle a perfect circle or the best circle there is or can be; it is precisely the lack of this attribute that makes sensible circles imperfect circles, "in contact with the straight everywhere".¹⁴ Again, the ideal attribute of being circular no matter compared to what assures us that there is no circle relative to which the Form circle is not or is less circular. On the other hand, it is more difficult, as Keyt has noted,¹⁵ to see a connection between being always circular and the superlative goodness of kind of the Form Circle. Actually, there are connections here and there from which Plato may have over-generalized: for example, we count durability or high degree of resistance to

change as a good making characteristic in the case of such artifacts as knives, shields, and cars. Plato himself makes a similar connection in 380D-381B, where he argues that the better a state or condition a thing is in the less liable it is to change. And in the case of some ethical concepts such as justice the connection seems very plausible: a man who is always just is more of a just man than one who is just in some temperal stretches and not others, other things being equal. But probably, given Plato's assumption that only what is invariable can be known, the best connection we can make between ideal attribute of, say, being always circular and the superlative goodness of kind of the Form Circle is between the attribute and the epistemic value of the Form: this attribute contributes to the Form Circle's being the epistemic paradigm of its kind, the best object of its kind to know. And the same seems to true of the fourth ideal attribute, being circular to all who apprehend it no matter from where. It seems then that the first two ideal attributes of the Form Circle contribute to its being the best circle there is or can be, and the remaining two attributes contribute to its being the best circle to know. And presumably similarly for the other Forms other than the Form of the Good. If so, we can add another proposition to Plato's theory of the Form of the Good:

- G13 It is by virtue of their ideal attributes that the Forms (other than the Form of the Good) are the best objects of their kind (or, have superlative goodness of kind).

And from G11.1 and G13, it seems that we can derive the proposition:

- G14 It is by virtue of participating in the Form of the Good that all the other Forms are the best objects of their kind and the best objects of their kind to know.

Thus the Form of the Good is, as it should be, the formal cause of the superlative goodness of kind of all the other Forms. We can see, perhaps in a short-circuit way, that this proposition is on the right track, from a Platonic point of view, on the assumption that the Forms (other than the Good) are ideal exemplars: for on this assumption the forms have something in common, namely, their being the best objects of their kind; so it is natural that there should be a Form in virtue of which they have this in common, and in view of what this common feature is, it is natural that the Form would be the Good.

But now, having seen how it is appropriate for the Good to be the formal cause of the superlative goodness of kind of the Forms, we are faced with the question (raised by Q5) of how it is that it is also appropriate for the Good to be the formal cause of the superlative reality of kind of the Forms. For on Vlastos' interpretation of the doctrine of degrees of reality, which I believe is generally accurate, it is by virtue of (what we have their ideal attributes that the Forms are the most real objects of their kind. And from this and G11.1 it seems that we can derive the proposition

- G15 It is by virtue of participation in the Form of the Good that all the other Forms are the most real objects of their kind (or, have superlative reality of kind).

The answer to our question is, I believe, that here we do have a "conflation" of superlative reality of kind and superlative goodness of kind. For it is by virtue of the very same ideal attributes, it seems, that a Form is both the best object of its kind and the most real object of its kind. Thus the superlative goodness of a given kind and the superlative reality of the same kind coincide, not only in the sense that the best and most real objects of a given kind are one and the same, i.e., the Form of that kind, but also in the stronger sense that it is the very same ideal attributes of a Form that constitute both its superlative reality and its superlative goodness of kind. But here we must be careful when we speak of "conflation": Vlastos has argued successfully, I believe, that Plato distinguishes between reality and existence; the above conflation does not by itself imply a confusion of existence and goodness. The theory, so far at least, does not sanction an inference from the fact that something exists to an attribution of goodness to it; it is not, not yet at least, in violation of the Humean dictum that one cannot derive "ought" (value) from "is" (fact) alone. In any case I doubt that Plato was ever tempted to draw the inference in this direction; he did not have high regard for the world, physical or social, that the sense revealed and he would be perhaps the last philosopher to draw an inference from what this world was like to what it ought to be. His temptation and his danger, as the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus* show,¹⁶ was drawing the inference in the reverse direction: from the supposition that it should be good that a certain state of affairs obtain (e.g. that the moon and the planets should move in certain ways) to the conclusion that it does actually obtain. But, in any case, the logical source of such an inference would not be only the present conflation of superlative reality and superlative goodness, but also Plato's hypothesis that the physical world was fashioned by a divine craftsman, who was completely good and unenvious, using the perfect Forms as his models. Thus, from the point of view of the autonomy of ethics -- the logical independence of goodness and rightness from brute facts -- the present conflation of goodness and reality is harmless. But the conflation of course does imply that, if there are degrees of goodness as there must be and degrees of reality as indeed there are in Plato's theory, the better a thing of a given kind is the more real a thing of that kind it is and conversely.

Ideal and Proper Attributes

To make further progress we need now to go to Q6, the question concerning the distinction between proper and ideal attributes. This distinction is crucial to our interpretation for a number of reasons, two of which are as follows: first, we answered the question concerning "the being and essence" of the Forms in terms of the ideal attributes of the Forms, which of course presupposes the distinction; second, we attributed to Plato G12 partly on the basis of this distinction, and G12 itself is stated in terms of the distinction, so that we can hardly understand what G12 tells us about the nature of the Form of the Good unless we understand the distinction. Moreover, one would think that, as Keyt has pointed out,¹⁷ the distinction seems a necessary one for Plato to draw or at least observe; or, at any rate, it would be a useful one for Plato to draw or observe, if he could,¹⁸ since, e.g., it would enable him to disarm the two-level paradoxes often hurled by Aristotle against the theory of Forms.¹⁹

The distinction between ideal and proper attributes has been recently discussed by Owen, Vlastos, and Keyt, though the terminology is only used by Keyt, a terminology that I find appropriate in the present context.²⁰ All three writers find the source of the distinction in Aristotle, especially

137b3-13, but it is not clear that they conceive the distinction in the same way, and they disagree as to whether Plato or the Academy ever drew or observed or could have drawn the distinction (as well as to whether Aristotle ever concedes the distinction to the Platonists). Let us first take a brief look at the ways they draw the distinction. Owen writes:

Given any Platonic Idea, at least two and possibly three very different sorts of thing can be said about it. (A) Certain things will be true of it in virtue of its status as an Idea, e.g., that it is immutable. These predicates (call them 'A-predicates') will be true of any idea whatever. (B) Certain things will be true of it in virtue of the particular concept it represents: these (call them 'B-predicates') are sometimes held to fall into two radically different groups. (B1)...(B2) Other predicates belong to the idea because...they are simply accepted as serving to define the particular concept in question. Man, for instance, is two-footed and an animal. (Op. p. 108; cf. also pp. 119-120.)

We are not interested here in B1-predicates, but only in the distinction between A-predicates (corresponding to Keyt's ideal predicates) and B2-predicates (corresponding to Keyt's proper predicates). Vlastos introduces the distinction in Aristotle's terms:

...sentences of the form "the Idea of F is P"...are analyzed by Aristotle as true if P is predicated of "the Idea Idea" and false if predicated of it F," as, e.g., "The Idea of Man is resting," whose ambiguity is resolved by the observation that "resting belongs to Man-himself not man, but Idea [Here Vlastos quotes 137B6-7]. (Op.Cit., p. 323)

Presumably, the predicates that belong to the Idea (Form) Man Idea correspond to Keyt's ideal attributes and Owen's A-predicates and those that belong to the Idea Man Man correspond to Keyt's proper attributes and Owen's B2-predicates. Finally, Keyt discusses the passage, introduces the terms "ideal" and "proper" and defines the two notions:

Aristotle here distinguishes two respects in which a Form may possess an attribute. The attribute of rest belongs to the Idea of man as Idea; on the other hand, the attribute of being composed of soul and body belongs to the Idea of living creature as living creature. An attribute that belongs to an Idea as Idea I shall call an "ideal" attribute. An ideal attribute is one whose absence from a thing entails that the thing is not a Platonic Idea. This is my definition, not Aristotle's; but I hope it marks out the class of attributes he has in mind. Notice that by my definition an ideal attribute is not simply one that belongs to every Form.

The second respect in which a Form may possess an attribute enters into Aristotle's characterization of a proprium: what is allegedly a proprium of such and such is really a proprium if and only if (1) it is an attribute of the Form of such and such, and (2) it belongs to the Form because the Form is such and such. Thus being composed of soul and body is a proprium of living creature since it is an attribute of the Form of living creature and an attribute because the Form is a living creature (b11-13); but rest is not a proprium of man since, although an attribute of the Form of man, it is not an attribute because the Form is a man.

Keyt next notes that what Aristotle has characterized here is not a proprium, strictly, i.e. "a non-defining attribute that belongs to this thing alone" 102a18-19) but something broader, and introduces his definition of attribute:

Taking my lead from Aristotle's temporary, broad characterization of a proprium, I shall call an attribute that belongs to a Form in this second respect a "proper" attribute. I use 'proper' here in the sense in which it means 'peculiar' and is opposed to 'common'. Again, I suggest a definition what I hope captures the class of attributes Aristotle has in mind: a attribute of a given Form is one whose absence from a thing entails that the thing is not an instance of the given Form. Thus animal is a proper attribute of the Form of man; for if a thing is not an animal, it cannot be a man. (Op.Cit., pp. 12, 13)

The first question that arises is whether the distinction between ideal and proper attributes of Forms is compatible with the ontology of Plato's theory of Forms. Vlastos seems to argue that it is not. If he is right, it can hardly be a good idea to expound Plato's theory of goodness using the distinction, as I have done. We can use a distinction an author did not make, to expound and illuminate his theory provided the distinction is compatible with his theory; Vlastos did so himself in his illuminating paper "An Ambiguity in the Sophist." But if the distinction is not compatible, we will probably end up distorting the theory. Is Vlastos then right? Well, I think he is and he isn't. The issue turns on two points: (1) whether we conceive of the Forms as ideal exemplars complete with non-Pauline self-predication, or as properties that are not self-predicational; and, perhaps, (2) on how we construe sentences of the form "P belongs to the Form F qua F". Vlastos is right, I think, if we conceive of the Forms as (transcendent) properties which are not non-Pauline self-predicational; and he is right in the sense that, under this supposition, the distinction would not apply to the Forms. For, so far as I can see, if the Forms are not (non-Pauline) self-predicational, they would have no proper attributes at all, and the distinction would be at least idle as applied to the Forms; and Vlastos would be right in as he does; p. 332) that while the expression 'the Idea of Animal Idea' would have a referent, namely the Form Animal, the expression "the Idea of Animal Animal" could or would have none (for indeed the latter expression implies that the Idea of Animal is an animal). On the other hand, if the Forms are conceived as ideal

exemplars with non-Pauline self-predication, the distinction is perfectly compatible with the theory of Forms and indeed applies to it; on this conception the referent of the above two expressions would be one and the same, namely the Form Animal. To go to point (2), the function of the word translated "qua" in the present context is, I think, simply to indicate the inferential basis on which the attribute is asserted of the subject. Though we need a systematic study of Aristotle's uses of this important word (he puts it to many important uses, and the notion is crucial to some later philosophers such as Spinoza), I believe that in its present use it is the descendant, so to speak, of Plato's "in virtue of" and can plausibly be rendered by "because", as Owen and Keyt often take it. Thus, to say, for example, that rest belongs to Living Creature itself qua Form is to indicate the inferential basis on which the attribute of being at rest is asserted of Living Creature itself. The complete inference is: Living Creature itself is a Form; all Forms are at rest; therefore, Living Creature itself is at rest. Similarly, to say that being composed of body and soul belongs to Living Creature itself qua living creature is to indicate the inferential basis on which the attribute is asserted of the subject. The complete inference is: Living Creature itself is a living creature; all living creatures are composed of body and soul; therefore, Living Creature itself is composed of body and soul. Here, non-Pauline self-predication is explicitly stated in the complete inference, and is implicit in the expression "qua living creature". This construction of "qua", essentially as "because", begins to disarm, I think, the other objection that Vlastos has to applying the distinction to Forms. He cites Symp. 211A, where Plato denies that the Form Beauty "is beautiful in one way (or, in one respect), ugly in another", and says that "the Aristotelian formula establishes the P-distinction at the price of losing this very feature of the Idea, allowing it to be P and not-P but in different respects, P F, not-P F". (Op.Cit., p. 331) Now this is a case where, on Vlastos' own interpretation,²¹ the Form Beauty is conceived by Plato as being non-Pauline self-predicational, i.e. the Form Beauty is beautiful, so this objection if correct cuts across our argument concerning (1). But on the present construction of "qua" as "because" I do not think that the objection is sound: to allow that the attribute P belong to the Form F qua F and does not belong to the Form F qua Form is not necessarily to allow that the Form F is P in one respect and not-P in another respect; for on the present interpretation of "qua" as "because" the negation sign goes in front of the whole "because" clause, not in front of the attribute sign "P". What is denied is not that P belongs to the Form of F, but only that P belongs to the Form F because it is a Form; and the latter denial is perfectly compatible with P belonging to the Form F. Thus Plato can deny the attribute of being composed of body and soul belongs to the Form Living creature because it is a Form, without denying that this attribute belongs to this Form. And the Euthyphro shows that Plato is capable of making such a point, since there he denies that anything, including Holiness, is holy because it is loved by all the gods while allowing that Holiness is loved by all gods. In any case, in the Symp. passage what Plato is denying is that the Form Beauty can be qualified in any way relative to its proper, self-predicational attributes; i.e. he wants to say that the Form Beauty is beautiful in all respects, always, etc. This point would not be compromised by his allowing that the Form Beauty is beautiful because of the particular Form it is and also that it is at rest (invariant) because it is a Form.

I conclude, then, that the distinction between ideal and proper attributes is perfectly compatible with the ontology of Plato's theory of Forms, provided that we conceive of the Forms as ideal exemplars with self-predication, and provided that we interpret "qua" as "because". Here I must make it explicit that I am not maintaining that Plato always and consistently conceived of the Forms as ideal exemplars with self-predication. I am only maintaining that sometimes he so conceived them, and in particular that he so conceived them in the middle dialogues and in conjunction with his theory of goodness in the

We shall presently see that this conception seems indeed essential to this theory of the Form of the Good.

We are now free to take up the question whether Plato ever made explicitly the distinction between proper and ideal attributes -- which he never did, or (the more interesting question) whether he observed the distinction in practice in the sense that his expressed views and arguments are consistent with it. This question is related to our question Q7, how the goodness of sensible things is to be accounted for on the theory of the Form of the Good as we interpreted it. Now Keyt has produced striking evidence that Plato confused ideal and proper attributes of Forms. He says:

Although Aristotle, in commenting on the theory of Forms, draws this very distinction, there is striking evidence that Plato himself overlooked it. The evidence, apart from his silence on the matter, consists in some bad mistakes that he would have been unlikely to make if he had seen it. (Keyt, (1), p. 230)

The "bad mistakes" consist in certain inferences that Plato makes in the *Timaeus* from certain Forms, used as models, having certain features to their sensible copies having these features. The general context is familiar. The divine craftsman (the *Dimiurge*), being good and unenvious, wishes to make the sensible world as good as possible; to do this he takes the Forms as his models and tries to fashion the sensible world after the Forms as much as possible (that is, I suppose, as much as is possible given the defective nature of matter). In particular the *dimiurge* copies the Form of living creature. This Form, Keyt says, "has only one feature that a sane craftsman would copy, having a soul and a body" (a proper attribute of the Form); but "the *Dimiurge* is not content to stop here. He notices that his model is unique, timeless, and generic, and proceeds to copy these attributes" (presumably ideal attributes). (p. 232.) In the case of the first of these latter attributes, Keyt quotes *Timaeus* 31a2-5

Plato's argument is this: the cosmos was made according to its model; its model is unique; therefore, the cosmos is unique. If Plato accepts this argument, he should also accept the following one, which within his system has true premises and a false conclusion: the planet Mercury was made according to its model (the Form of heavenly god); its model is unique; therefore, Mercury is the only heavenly god (that is, the only celestial body)." (pp.232-233.)

Concerning an inference from the second ideal attribute, Keyt cites 37c6-38c3 and interprets:

Plato's argument is this: the cosmos resembles its model as closely it can; its model is timeless, which it cannot be; so the cosmos has a feature that resembles, although it falls short of the timelessness of its model (namely, eternal temporal duration). By the same reasoning a circle that is drawn on paper and preserved for a year would resemble the Form of circle more closely than one that is drawn with the same accuracy by immediately erased." (p. 233.)

Keyt makes a similar point regarding a similar inference from the attribute of being "generic". He also cites 132c9-11 as containing a similar argument, the argument "that since Forms are thoughts [on a given hypothesis temporarily proposed by Socrates] and things share in the Forms, each of these things is itself composed of thoughts", and says that this argument is "a paradigm of the fallacy of division." (pp. 234-35). It is because he copies these ideal attributes that the divine craftsman is "mad". And Vlastos, in his Plato's Universe understandably refers to one of these inferences of Plato's as "a curious error." (p. 29.)

We are now in the happy or unhappy position to show that, given our interpretation of the Form of the Good in the Plato "had" to make these "curious mistakes" and his divine craftman "had" to be "mad". For we can show that copying the ideal attributes of the Forms, if one wishes to make sensible things as good as possible, is a direct consequence of the views that the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the being and the essence of the other Forms and that the being and the essence of the Forms consists in their ideal attributes. We are assuming that in the Timaeus, when Plato was making these "curious mistakes", the Forms are still conceived as ideal exemplars with self-predication -- the best objects of their kind -- for why else would the Demiurge copy them if he wished to make sensible things as good as possible? And the position is happy for our interpretation since it provides evidence for it, but unhappy for Plato if the inferences are the "bad mistakes" Keyt seems to show them to be.

To see why it is that Plato had to make the "curious mistakes" and why his Demiurge had to be "mad", on the interpretation we have given of the Form of the Good, let us go to our question Q7: on this interpretation how is the goodness of sensible things to be accounted for? Let us work with three kinds of examples, a mathematical Form, Circle, a "natural kind" Form, Living Creature, and an ethical Form, Justice. To be a circle or circular a sensible must participate in the Form Circle, and this is participation in the proper attributes of the Form, namely being circular (and perhaps to all those attributes being entailed by this proper attribute, e.g. being a figure). But to be a good circle (to some degree) a sensible, on the interpretation we have given, must participate (to some degree) in the ideal attributes of the Form Circle: for, on that interpretation, it is the ideal attributes of the Form Circle that constitute its superlative goodness and it is by virtue of having these ideal attributes that the Form Circle participates in the Form of the Good. Participation merely in the proper attributes of the Form circle (to some degree, if degrees of participation in proper attributes is allowed) would have no tendency to show that the sensible is a good circle (to some degree), for there is not

necessarily any connection between the proper attributes of this Form (or the Form Triangle, or Square, or Chiliagon, or Four or Five) and the Form of the Good. But participation (to some degree, and here degrees are appropriate) in the ideal attributes of being circular in every respect, always, no matter compared to what, and to all who apprehend it no matter from where, would show that the participant is a good circle (to some degree, or comparatively), for it is these attributes that make the Form Circle the best circle there is or can be and it is by virtue of having these that it participates in the Form of the Good. And similarly with the goodness of sensible living creatures. Thus, if the Demiurge wished merely to create or fashion a sensible living creature it would be sufficient for him to copy the proper attributes of the Form of living creature, such as being composed of body and soul. But if he wishes to create a sensible living creature that is as good as possible he can do so, given the present interpretation of the Form of the Good of the by copying as much as possible the ideal attributes of the Form. Thus, far from being "mad" for doing so, he would be "mad" -- or rather futile -- if he didn't! Correspondingly, "the curious mistakes" and the "bad arguments" of Plato should begin to appear less curious and not as bad: for we are now to understand the theory of the Form of the Good in the Republic as an implicit premise(s) in these arguments. For example, the argument "from eternity" would be more complicated roughly perhaps as follows: the Form of Living Creature is the Best living creature there is or can be; it is by virtue of being eternal (among other things, or "eternal" standing for a summary of its ideal attributes) that it is the best object of its kind and it is by virtue of this that it participates in the Form of the Good; therefore, if one wishes to fashion a sensible living creature as good as possible one must copy the "eternity" of the Form as much as possible.²² Of course I am speaking here to the validity of Plato's argument, not its soundness -- but this is the point to which Keyt is speaking and certainly part of Vlastos' "curious". The soundness of the argument is quite another matter, for this depends on the truth of the theory that according to me is the theoretical backbone of the argument. For the present we may note, in addition that Plato or his craftsman would never make the mad mistakes of some of Keyt's illustrations, for example, the mistake of making a paper shield and justifying himself on the ground that his pattern (model) was of paper (p. 231). Far from sanctioning such mistakes the theory excludes them wholesale: for no sensible object is a reliable model, certainly never the best model, for making a good object of a kind; only the best objects of a kind are, the ideal exemplars, the Forms; sensible objects are copies or copies of copies. The "paperiness" of the "model" paper shield, far from making the best shield there is or can be, makes it one of the worst -- a point we can accept. Of course Keyt was only illustrating in this passage the type of mistake he is attributing to Plato -- he was not saying that Plato or his Demiurge would make this mistake. But now we can see why they wouldn't. If we construct a parallel argument, to the one we have reconstructed above about "eternity", but with any sensible object as the model, the theoretical premises of this argument would be false for Plato: for him no sensible object is the best object of its kind; and far from the ideal attributes of material objects -- their materiality, their variable nature -- being what makes them the best objects of their kind, they are precisely what makes them irremediably defective.

Here we can begin to see where the fault really lies -- in Plato's theory. It lies in the combination of the conception of Forms as self-predicational with the theory of goodness, the theory that the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the ideal attributes of the Forms and that it is by virtue of these that the Forms are the best objects of their kind. Without self-predication this theory of goodness would collapse; for without it the Forms would not be ideal exemplars -- the best objects of their kind -- and so there would be no motivation at all for supposing that the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the being and the essence of the Forms.²³ But why is this combination faulty? For one thing, it seems to imply all the absurdities of non-Pauline self-predication. To be the best possible shield -- the best object of its kind -- a thing would have to be both a Form and a shield, an immaterial shield! Can there be such a thing? And would it be the best possible shield? For another, the theory seems inadequate as a theory of goodness, for it seems to imply that proper attributes are irrelevant to the goodness of a thing. Can this be correct? Even according to Plato's other theory of goodness in the

the theory of virtue and function of the first book, a shield is a good shield insofar as it performs its function well; and surely this has to do with its size and shape, its balance, its weight and degree of impenetrability²⁴ -- all apparently proper attributes; whereas, according to the theory of the Form of the Good, the goodness of the sensible shield depends only on the degree to which it resembles the ideal attributes of the Form Shield -- its invariability, indestructibility, its always being a shield, its being a shield in every respect, and so on. Moreover, in the case of certain ethical Forms, Plato seems to hold a strong connection between their proper attributes and the Form of the Good. For him, being a just man (or, a just city) entails being a good man (or, a good city). But being just is certainly a proper attribute of the Form Justice. So in addition to the connection between the of the Form Justice and the Form of the Good (a connection which is the same as that between the ideality of any Form and the Form of the Good), there is also a strong entailment con-

between the proper attribute of the Form, being just, and the Form of the Good. This, it appears, is as it should be (I mean, there ought to be such a connection). But if so, it seems to contradict the theory of the Form of the Good we have expounding; or at any rate, if this is so, the Form of the Good cannot consist just in the ideality common to all the Forms. And in the latter case why should we suppose that the goodness entailed by being just is the same as the goodness by virtue of which all the Forms are the best objects of their kind, or that there is even any connection between the two? The goodness entailed by being just is probably the functional goodness mentioned earlier; for it is on the basis of the theory of function and virtue that the definitions of just city and just man are framed. But how this theory of functional goodness is connected with the theory of the Form of the Good is not clear.

Have we succeeded in showing that the distinction between ideal and proper attributes, though not explicitly drawn by Plato, is consistent with his expressed views and arguments? Perhaps not entirely, though it is illuminating to expound his theory of the Form of the Good in terms of it. Let us look again at our data and indulge in some hopefully educated speculation. In the passages in the Symp. and the where Plato contrasts the Forms with the sensibles that participate in them, we found the following situation: unlike the sensibles that participate in it, the Form Beauty (Justice, Circle, Living

Creature, etc.) (I1) always exists, is neither generated or destroyed, does not increase or decrease, exists by itself; further, it (I2) is beautiful (just, etc.) in all respects, is always beautiful, is beautiful no matter compared to what, and is beautiful to all who apprehend it no matter from where. Now Plato in these passages was clear, I think, that the Form Beauty "has" these two sets of attributes whereas its sensible participants do not; and presumably similarly with the other Forms listed in these passages. Further, it is clear that the Form Beauty could have the first set of attributes (I1) whether it were conceived as a property without non-Pauline self-predication or as an ideal exemplar with such self-predication. But the Form Beauty could not have the second set of attributes (I2) unless it were non-Pauline self-predicational; for it obviously could not be always beautiful or beautiful in all respects unless it were beautiful to begin with. And similarly with the other Forms. This much is not speculation. But now when we bring in the distinction between ideal and proper attributes a curious situation develops. The attributes I1 are ideal attributes of the Forms no matter whether we draw the distinction according to Aristotle, Owen, Keyt, or Vlastos. And being beautiful, being circular, being just, (and all the attributes entailed by them) are proper attributes of the corresponding Forms, at least according to Keyt's definition (and, I think, Owen's and Aristotle's). But the attributes of set I2 -- e.g. being always beautiful, being beautiful in all respects, etc., "straddle the fence": these attributes, which I "provisionally" called ideal attributes above, are neither ideal attributes nor proper attributes according to Keyt's definitions, yet they have connections with both. Unlike the attribute of being circular, being always circular is not a proper attribute of the Form circle according to Keyt's definition since its absence from a thing would not entail that the thing is not an instance of the Form Circle; according to Plato sensible circles are instances of the Form Circle and yet none of them is always circular. Again, the attribute of always being circular is not an ideal attribute of the Form Circle according to Keyt's definition since the absence of it from a thing would not entail that the thing is not a Platonic Idea; for Plato there are lots of Forms, e.g. the Form Square, that are not circular at all and hence not always circular. At the same time, attributes I2 have connections to both proper attributes and ideal attributes I1. The with proper attributes is that attributes I2 entail the corresponding proper attributes; being always beautiful entails being beautiful, being beautiful in all respects entails being beautiful. In this respect attributes I2 are unlike attributes I1. But there is an important respect in which I1 and I2 are alike: just as without being a Form a thing could not have attributes I1, so without being a Form a thing could not have attributes I2. Nothing could be always such and such or such and such in all respects, etc. without being a Form. And this is my justification for calling "provisionally" ideal attributes. We can put the "straddling of the fence" feature of I2 attributes in a nutshell as follows: The Form Circle is circular (proper attribute) not because it is a Form but because of the particular Form it is; it is indestructible (I1) not because of the particular Form it is but because it is a Form; but it is always circular (I2) both because it is a Form and because of the particular Form it is. Now we can speculate that it is pretty unlikely that somebody would see this point unless he drew the distinction between proper and ideal attributes explicitly and asked himself to which genus the three types of attributes (I1, I2, and proper) belong. And since Plato never explicitly drew the distinction it is pretty unlikely that he did this. But Plato does work with the three

types of attributes in the various contexts. And the theory of the Form of the Good in the Republic, in which the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the being and essence of the Forms, requires him to include attributes of type I2, as well as type I1, in the being and essence of the Forms. For, as we have argued, without I2 the Forms would not be ideal exemplars, the best objects of their kind. Nor would they be the best objects of their kind to know, since in epistemology the best objects to know must be undeceptive, and this is assured by I2 attribute of the Forms not appearing such and such from one point of view and not such and such from another. So in the context of the theory of the Form of the Good and the epistemology of the Republic Plato was probably lumping together I1 and I2 as belonging to the same genus, the ideality of the Forms. And Plato uses general summary phrases that could cover both.²³ At the same time, when Plato is thinking in general of sensibles participating in the Forms he is thinking of participation in the proper attributes of the Forms. But when he is thinking of the (relative) goodness of sensible things, in the context of the theory of the Form of the Good of the Republic, he is required to think, as we argued, of participation in the I2 attributes of the Forms if such participation is going to be a ground for the sensible being good of a kind to some degree -- and this is the context of the Timaeus arguments. Now since I2 attributes entail the corresponding proper attributes, such participation would entail participation also in the proper attributes. Here in a sense I2 and proper attributes are lumped together. But this lumping together is perhaps harmless so long as participation in I2 attributes admits of degrees -- which assures degrees of goodness -- and so long as such participation always "falls short" of complete participation, which blocks the disastrous result that such participation would entail that the sensibles are Forms (a parallel result to the result of the argument in the Parmenides 132c9-11 mentioned by Keyt).

It must also be noted that since the ideal attributes of the second kind (I2) of a given Form entail the proper attributes of the Form (e.g. being always beautiful entails being beautiful), there is room here for another confusion that would be vast indeed. If the Form of the Good is thought of as containing (or consisting in) the I2 attributes in a concrete rather than an abstract sense, then the Form of the Good would indeed entail the proper attributes of all the other Forms. But I seriously doubt that Plato ever thought of the matter in this way. On such an interpretation, the Form of the Good would be a vast conjunction, a wild motley indeed, of all the I2 attributes of all the other Forms, concretely conceived; and the proper attributes of all the Forms would be equally deducible from the Form of the Good. I think Plato thinks of the I2 attributes in an abstract way insofar as they are contained in the Form of the Good: it is in virtue of participating in the Form of the Good that the other Forms are "always the same", "the same in all respects", "the same no matter compared to what" and "the same to all who apprehend them no matter from where." These abstract phrases, the first of which he uses quite often, are supposed to catch the idea that, e.g. it is not in virtue of participating in the Form of the Good that the Square itself contains four right angles, but it is in virtue of participating in the Form of the Good that Square itself always contains four right angles, contains four right angles to all who apprehend it no matter from where, and so on. We have to think here of ideal attributes I2 in abstraction from the proper attributes contained in them. Plato, lacking the device of variables, tried to catch this abstraction, I believe, with the above phrases. It is important to see that this is very Platonic indeed: for the above phrases attempt to catch exactly what is common in the attributes of set I2.

We can finally end this long discussion of the second round by some hopefully educated speculation on what the Form of the Good would be, given our interpretation of the theory. Gl2 tells us that the ideal attributes of all the other Forms are proper attributes of the Form of the Good, and Gl1.1 tells us that the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the other Forms having their ideal attributes. So it would seem that the Form of the Good consists in or is constituted by the very ideality common to the other Forms by virtue of which they are the best objects of their kind and the best objects of their kind to know. Such ideality, it would seem, would have to be conceived pretty abstractly, super-generally as it were. For one thing, it is not ideality, superlative goodness and superlative reality, of kind, as is the case with the other Forms. The Form of the Good is not a superlatively "good something-or-other", as Cooper points out;²⁶ it is, presumably, superlatively good, period. The goodness of the other Forms is indeed superlative, but also partial, the superlative goodness of kind. Moreover, the other Forms are in a sense not self-sufficient: they are the best objects of their kind by virtue of participating in the Form of the Good, and they are the most real objects of their kind for the same reason. But the Good itself is what it is presumably by virtue of itself. Whether it is to be "conceived in explicitly mathematical terms", as Cooper also says, seems to me dubious. The theory requires, rather, that mathematical Forms, at any rate insofar as they are thought of as the best objects of their kind and the best objects of their kind to know, are conceived in terms of it.

III

The Third Round or Wave of Paradox: The Divided Line

The third wave or paradox is the simile of the divided line, especially the statements that Plato makes about the upper two portions of the line (Rep. 509C-511E). Though the Form of the Good is not explicitly mentioned in this section (except perhaps implicitly at 509D as the thing that "rules over the intelligible kind and region"), there is universal agreement among the commentators that the Form of the Good is at the top of the ontological division of the line and knowledge of the Good at the top of the epistemological division, and there is no reason to doubt that this is indeed meant, especially as this harmonizes with the previous simile of the sun and the following allegory of the cave. We are not concerned here with the whole of the divided line and a complete interpretation of it, but only with the relations, ontological and epistemological, between the upper two portions of the line, the mathematical and the

Plato begins by characterizing these two portions as follows:

...there is one section of it which the soul is compelled to investigate by treating as images the things imitated in the former division, and by means of hypotheses from which it proceeds not up to a first principle but down to a confusion, while

there is another section in which it advances from hypotheses to an unhypothesized beginning without using the images of the other section but by means of Forms themselves and proceeding through these. (Shorey, Grube, trans.) (509B)

Glaucon says he does not fully understand and Socrates proceeds to explain each section further:

...students of geometry and arithmetic...bypothesize (postulate, assume) the odd and the even and figures and the three kinds of angles..., regard them as known, and treating them as hypotheses they do not find it necessary to give any account of them to themselves or others as if clear to all; these are their starting points, and going through the remaining steps they reach a conclusion on what they started to investigate. (510CD)...You know also that they use visible figures and talk about them, but they are not thinking about them but about the models of which these are likenesses; they are making their point about the square itself, the diameter itself, not about the diameter which they draw...(510DE)

Understand then that by the other of the intelligible I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic. It does not consider the hypotheses beginnings but really hypotheses, stepping stones, spring-boards in order to reach that which is unhypothetical and the beginning of all. Having reached this and again taking hold of what follows from it, it does come down to a conclusion without making use of anything visible at all, but proceeding by means of Forms and through Forms and ending in Forms. (511BC)

Finally Glaucon gives a summary of how he understands the matter and receives Socrates' approval:

I understand, he said, but not completely, for you seem to be speaking of a mighty task -- that you wish to distinguish the intelligible reality contemplated by the science of dialectic as clearer than that viewed by the so-called sciences, for which their hypotheses are first principles. The students of the so called sciences, it is true, are compelled to study them by thought and not by sense-perception, yet because they do not go back to a first principle but proceeding from hypotheses, you do not think that they have any clear understanding of their subjects, though these can be understood if approached from a first principle. You seem to me to call the attitude of mind of geometers and such reasoning but not understanding, reasoning being midway between opinion and understanding. (511CD)

An immense amount has been written on these passages. Here I wish only to dispute two widely accepted points of interpretation and suggest an alternative interpretation which is the natural outcome of the second round. Both points seem crucial in understanding the epistemology of the divided line and the epistemological priority of the Form of the Good.

The first point I wish to dispute is that Plato's point in calling the beginning of mathematics "hypotheses" is that they are underived, or unproved, or undeduced or undemonstrated. Concerning what hypotheses Plato was referring to there is much disagreement; just about everything has been suggested, including the odd itself, figures themselves, angles themselves, propositions asserting their existence, axioms attributing properties to them, and definitions of them. In this dispute I do not wish to enter. I assume that Plato was referring to whatever the mathematicians of his day used as Euclid uses definitions, axioms, and postulates at the beginning of the *Elements*. My concern is with what his point was in calling them hypotheses. The majority of commentators (Adam, Cornford, Ross, to mention only a few)²⁷ suppose that his point is that these things are underived, unproved, or undemonstrated. Now it is true enough that if these things were used as Euclid uses definitions, axioms, and postulates, -- and apparently they were -- they were indeed underived or unproved or undemonstrated, unlike the theorems. But I do not believe that this is Plato's point in calling them "hypotheses" in this context. For one thing, while Plato calls the beginning points of geometry and arithmetic "hypotheses" or "hypothetical" (he uses the noun, the adjective, and the verb), he twice in these passages calls the beginning point of dialectic, that is the Form of the Good, "unhypothetical". Now if "hypothetical" here meant underived or unproved or undemonstrated, then presumably "unhypothetical" would mean "proved" or "demonstrated". But there is no evidence whatsoever that Plato thought in these passages that the Form of the Good (or propositions about its nature) could be proved or derived or demonstrated. On the contrary, by placing it at the beginning of knowledge he is implying that it is not derived or proved from something else. Indeed from what could it be derived in the present context? Adam, making the assumption we are disputing, says, in desperation I think, that it (the Good) is "itself proved by an exhaustive scrutiny of all noeta" (intelligibles). Just what this means -- and how this would make the Good "unhypothetical" -- he does not tell us. In the second place, and aside from evidence, if one of Plato's complaints about mathematics were that its beginning(s) is (are) underived or unproved -- a defect that dialectic is to remedy -- he would be holding an obviously untenable position: for dialectic too would have to start somewhere, and no matter where it began that beginning would have the same defect. But if this is not Plato's point, what is? I think it is simply that the beginnings of the mathematicians do not constitute knowledge, their beginning points are not known. They are beginnings of mathematics, but they are not beginnings(s) of knowledge; and for this reason, the propositions they validly derive from them, the theorems, are also not really known. As to whether the mathematicians realize this, Plato's text seems ambiguous; he says they regard them "as known", "give no account of them", supposing "they are obvious to everybody". (510C) But he seems clear that dialectic "does not consider the hypotheses beginnings but really hypotheses" (511B); that is, they are not considered by the dialectician as beginnings of knowledge but really unknown. How knowledge of the Form of the Good -- which is the correct beginning of knowledge -- helps to convert these unknown hypotheses into knowledge, we will take up presently.

The second major point of interpretation I wish to dispute, a point that goes naturally with the first point, is that Plato holds that once we (doing dialectic) have reached the Form of the Good and have knowledge of it, we can deduce or derive from this knowledge the hypotheses of the mathematicians.

This idea goes naturally with the first point we disputed, since such a deduction would remedy the alleged defect of the hypotheses of the mathematicians. The idea that Plato had such a deduction in view is also widely held, from Adam to Cornford to Ross and beyond.²⁸ Indeed Cornford tried to suggest how such a deduction might be possible by introducing another Form at the top, alongside the Good, namely Unity, a mathematical Form. Ross cor-

rectly pointed out that there is no evidence whatsoever for this in our texts, but nevertheless continued to hold on to the idea of such a deduction. Now this idea seems to be the height of paradox indeed. To aim at deducing all of mathe-

from a few principles is a highly ambitious but not paradoxical ideal, one that perhaps began to be approached in this century. To suppose that all of mathematics can be deduced from a single Platonic Form may begin to sound incredible. But to suppose further that this is the Form of the Good is paradoxical indeed: for there does not even seem a *facie* connection between goodness and figures and numbers; the Form of the Good seems to be the wrong Form for this role. Do we really have good evidence to suppose that in our passages Plato had such a deduction in mind? The passages in which Plato describes the "descent" from the Form of the Good to other Forms are obscure and ambiguous and the meaning of his words and phrases much in dispute. Here we do not even have strong evidence, not to speak of compelling evidence, that he held such a view. Moreover, such a view would seem to involve a vast confusion of ideal and proper attributes. For the hypotheses of the mathematicians are about the

attributes of the Forms the hypotheses are really about; they are about the proper attributes of the Forms Odd, Even, Square, Triangle, Acute Angle, etc. But the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the ideal attributes of these and all the other Forms. How then are we going to get entailment relations between the attributes of the Form of the Good and the proper attributes of these Forms. Further, the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the being and essence of all the other Forms. Why then would the proper attributes of (some) mathematical Forms be singled out for such deduction? And if they are not singled out, we would have deductions and entailment relations between the attributes of the Form of the Good and the proper attributes of other kinds of Forms, of, say, natural and artificial kinds, Living Creature, perhaps, or the Form Artifact, or the Form Planet, and so on. And in that case, what would the Form of the Good be? Instead of or in addition to being the very ideality of the Forms, it would also have to be, it seems, a conjunction of several Forms of diverse kinds, mathematical, natural, and so on. I see no evidence that Plato thought of the Form of the Good in this way in our passages. It must be admitted of course that the idea of such a deduction is a powerful one, and probably is modeled on the deduction of theorems from hypotheses by the mathematicians: if the hypotheses are known, valid derivations of theorems will yield knowledge of such theorems; similarly, valid derivations of the hypotheses themselves from known things will yield knowledge of the hypotheses. Moreover, the influence of the Pythagoreans (who apparently tried to express even ethical concepts in mathematical terms), the high esteem in which Plato held mathematics, the high place of mathematical studies in the education of the rulers, and Plato's analysis of matter and the movements of the heavenly bodies in mathematical terms in the *Timaeus*, all these render general plausibility to the idea of some intrinsic connection of some mathematical Forms and the Form of the Good. All the same I doubt that this interpretation is correct.

But if it isn't, what is? It seems to me that the interpretation of the epistemology of the upper portions of the divided line has to be along the lines established in the second round. An obvious clue and a solid handle is provided by the idea of the second round that the Form of the Good is "the cause" of the knowability of the Forms. The sense we have given to this idea is that it is by virtue of their ideal attributes (I1 and I2) that the Forms are knowable entities and that the Form of the Good is the formal cause of the other Forms' having their real attributes. We have here clearly a theory as to what a knowable object is: to be knowable an object must be ungenerated, indestructible, not subject to increase and decrease, must exist by itself (I1 attributes), and it must be always the same (or, must always be such and such, where "such and such" is a place holder for proper attributes), the same in every respect, the same no matter compared to what, and the same to everyone who apprehends it no matter from where (I2 attributes). This theory has at least one virtue: it is difficult to see how anyone who were acquainted (with the "mind's eye") with such entities would make a mistake about them; at any rate a whole set of mistakes due to variability and spatial location (in the case of physical objects) has been summarily excluded (though it is difficult to see how purely logical errors (as to what follows from what or what is entailed by what) have also been excluded). And this coheres well with the very strong distinction that what is drawn in Book V between knowledge and belief in terms of their powers and objects. Now this puts the dialectician in an epistemologically superior position to that of the mathematician. For unlike the mathematician he deals only with Forms: both in the "ascent" and "descent" to and from the Form of the Good, he begins, deals, and ends with nothing but Forms. Because of this and the nature of his objects he is assured freedom from error; at any rate, he is assured freedom from error as what his objects are, what the "immediate" proper attributes of each Form are, that is, attributes that a Form can be "seen" to have without recourse to inference. The mathematicians, on the other hand, are at best in an ambiguous epistemological position. They deal both with Forms and with visible figures as images of the Forms; they talk about the visible figures but they are thinking about their models and making their points about them. Their hypotheses could be interpreted, by others perhaps, as being about their visible figures (applied mathematics presumably), or about their models. Insofar as their thought, their mathematical "intuitions", derive from the visible figures, they are not assured freedom from error (even though of course they may be making no actual error) as the dialecticians are. Plato says that they regard their hypotheses as known and obvious to everybody and give no account of them. What sort of "being known" and "obviousness" is he talking about? I think the "obviousness" of the visible figures; it is the visible illustrations that would make the hypotheses "obvious to everyone", precisely the things that, in Plato's theory, could not make the hypotheses knowledge. And what sort of "account" is it that the mathematicians do not give of their hypotheses? I argued that he does not mean that they are underived; and I think he does not mean that they do not give definitions of the concepts they use, for surely they did construct definitions and Euclid's Elements (much later of course) begins with definitions. I think he means that they give not epistemological account of the sorts of objects they want their hypotheses to be about, not the visible figures, but their models. They do not, for example, ask themselves and seek to answer the question, What sort of objects must the objects our hypotheses are about be if our hypotheses are to be true? They they have no theory of the objects their hypotheses

must be about if they are to be always true and to constitute knowledge. Because of their practice of using sensible figures they are liable to error or at any rate are not assured freedom of error. Because of this practice they also are not in a position to "see" the objects of their hypotheses "in splendid isolation" from sensible figures and begin to appreciate their nature. And also because, as mathematicians at least, they do not raise the above type of questions, they lack a theory of objects proper to mathematics. The dialectician, on the other hand, dealing only with Forms, has a chance to see their common nature, their nature as ideal objects possessing ideal attributes 11 and 12. And if he asks himself the Platonic question, In virtue of what do the Forms have these attributes in common?, presumably he will arrive at the of the Form of the Good. Looking downward from the Form of the Good the dialectician would see clearly what are Forms and what are not Forms; he would never make the mistake of confusing Forms with instances, for he has now grasped the nature of the Forms, he has grasped the notion of what it is to be a Form. And if at any rate he has Plato's conception of knowledge, a cardinal tenet of which is that to be known an object must always be the same, etc., the dialectician would see that only the Forms are possible object of knowledge; and that if mathematics is to be knowledge, mathematical hypotheses must be about only such objects. Thus what the super science of dialectic would do for mathematics is not to provide a super general known basis from which mathematical hypotheses (the beginning of mathematics) can be deduced, but rather a theory of objects that mathematical hypotheses (as well as the theorems) must be about if mathematics is to be knowledge. Such a theory would "free" mathematics from sensible figures in the sense that according to it the sensible figures are never evidence that the hypotheses are always true or known, but only images or illustrations or sensible participants of the objects the hypotheses are about. Plato's theory of Forms with the Form of the Good at the top serves mathematics by postulating the very objects that, according to Plato at least, mathematics needs to be about if it is to be knowledge.

What is the moral of our story? I think it is that the theory of the Form of the Good in the Republic is truly and coherently the centerpiece of the canonical Platonism of the middle dialogues, the centerpiece of Plato's metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and politics, and even his theory of love and art. The Form of the Good serves his metaphysics by bringing into relief the very ideality of the Forms, the eternal order and stability of the entities that must exist if this world is not to be a "vast sea of dissimilarity." It serves his epistemology by bringing into relief the knowability of the Forms, the attributes the Forms must have if there is to be knowledge. The Form of the Good serves his ethics and politics, and even his theory of love and art, by bringing into relief the superlative goodness of the Forms, the features that must be imitated if the imitations are to have any value. In his theory of the Form of the Good Plato was truly the first grand philosophical synthesiser. If to achieve such a grand synthesis he had to employ a few unholy combinations, such as the combination of reality, goodness, and self-predication, he may perhaps be forgiven -- at least if he is understood.

A minor moral, I hope, is that when Plato looked into "the orb of light" he really did see something. And it is a tribute, perhaps ironic, to his artistry, so evident in the three great similies, that when many others looked into the same orb of light through Plato's telescope they were warmed and elevated even though, apparently, they saw nothing.

Notes

1. This is a first draft of a paper that has not yet seen the light of criticism from colleagues or students. The Jowett quote is given by Shorey in the paper cited below.
2. The extensive and useful discussions by Cornford, Ross, and Robinson are perhaps good examples of these: F.M. Cornford, "Mathematics and Dialectic in the Republic VI-VII, in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. R.E. Allen, and the relevant commentary in his translation of the Republic; D. Ross, Plato's Theory of Ideas, pp. 39-69; R. Robinson, Plato's Earlier Dialectic, 2nd Ed., Chs. X & XI. Robinson gives a useful summary and discussion of previous interpretations. Paul Shorey's older paper, "The Idea of Good in Plato's Republic", University of Chicago Studies in Classical Philology, Vol. I, is a wide-ranging, stimulating, and even entertaining polemic. The editions and notes by Jowett & Campbell and by Adam have been useful to me. For the most part I have used Shorey's translation but I have occasionally consulted Corforde and Grube.
3. I have in mind particularly the recent discussions by I.M. Crombie, Plato's Doctrines, Vol. 1, pp. 103-133, and J.C.B. Gosling, Plato, Chs. IV & VII. I find these discussions philosophically stimulating and instructive; my chief criticism is that they do not stay close to the evidence, our texts, to produce convincing and accurate interpretations. Crombie, for example, raises what seem to me to be the right questions (p.121, 3rd paragraph), but in the subsequent two pages he tries to answer them by what seems to me to be almost entirely philosophically educated speculation, whereas what is needed, to begin with, is a philosophically educated discussion of what Plato actually says. In any case, his interpretation, so far as I understand it, of the notion of goodness in terms of the notion of "conformability to reason" seems to me off the mark (it is the notions of "the being and essence of the Forms" and the Form of the Good being as "the cause" of these that seem to me the fundamental ideas of our passages). And anyhow when it comes to the question "In what does conformability to reason consist?" Crombie trails off with the remark that "it is legitimate to suspect that we may be dealing more with a vision than with a clear idea, and that it may well be because the vision faded as he attempted to clarify it that Plato nowhere repeats this theme." (p. 124). I hope to have shown in this paper that Plato had a fairly clear and coherent idea as well as a great vision, and that it was given up in so far as a non-Pauline self-predication was given up in later dialogues.
4. I am heavily indebted, first of all, to Professor Vlastos' papers, "Degrees of Reality in Plato", "A Metaphysical Paradox", and "The 'Two-Level Paradoxes' in Aristotle", all in Platonic Studies (and less directly to several others such as "Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo" and several TMA papers). I am also heavily indebted to Professor David Keyt's papers, "Plato's Paradox that the Immutable is Unknowable", Philosophical Quarterly, January, 1969, and "The Mad Craftsman of the Timaeus", Phil. Rev., April, 1971, and to Professor G.E.L. Owen's "Dialectic and Eristic in the Treatment of the Forms", in Aristotle on Dialectic, ed. G.E.L. Owen.
5. For the first part of G5 see the speeches of Glaucon and Adeimantus in Bk. II.

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6. The attribution of this proposition to Plato has been widely discussed in connection with the TMA; see, e.g. Vlastos' TMA II in Platonic Studies, p. 348.

7. An earlier, Socratic, version of this has been discussed by Geach and myself. For see "The Socratic Fallacy", JHP, April 1972. In a forthcoming book, Socrates, Keagan Paul, 1978, I find that the evidence heavily favours Geach's attribution of this proposition to Plato. In the G3 itself is such evidence.

8. The distinction between proper and ideal attributes is discussed below.

9. "Degrees of Reality in Plato" and "A Metaphysical Paradox."

10. See Platonic Studies, particularly pp. 62-63, 66-67, and note 21.

11. See the relevant parts of Hintikka's paper "Knowledge and Its Objects in Plato" and my comments in J.M.E. Moravcsik, ed. Patterns in Plato's

12. See Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo," especially pp. 88-91.

13. This conception of the Forms is brought out by Geach in his "The Third Man Again", Phil. Rev., 65, 1956. It is also brought out by Vlastos in his "A Metaphysical Paradox", especially in the last two pages.

14. See Wedberg's discussion, especially pp. 49-50 and notes in his Plato's of Mathematics.

15. "The Mad Craftsman of the" e.g. p. 233.

16. Phaedo 97-99. An excellent discussion of the sort of teleological explanation employed here is found in Theodore E. Johnson's recent Ph.D. thesis, and Predications in Plato's Phaedo Graduate For the Timaeus see discussion in Plato's Uni pp. 28-30.

17. "The Mad Craftsman of the" op. cit., p. 230.

18. In "The 'Two-Level Paradoxes' in Aristotle" Vlastos seems to argue that the distinction is incompatible with the Platonic ontology. We take up this point shortly.

19. and G.E. L. Owen, op. cit. note 4 above. I wish to note briefly here that within the assumption of non-Pauline self-predication there will be certain two-level paradoxes against which the distinction between ideal and proper attributes is totally powerless. The Form Change provides an extreme example: if it is conceived with non-Pauline self-predication, some of its proper attributes will contradict flatly some of its ideal attributes, and the distinction fails to disarm the contradiction. In his discussion of such paradoxes Aristotle has nothing to be ashamed about in not bringing in the distinction.

20. Owen, "Dialectic and Eristic", Keyt, "Plato's Paradox", and Vlastos, "The 'Two-level Paradoxes'", note 4 above.

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21. At any rate in "A Metaphysical Paradox"-- see especially the penultimate paragraph.

22. I must say that the other two "bad arguments" would be more difficult to reconstruct along the lines we reconstructed the "eternity argument". (Such reconstructions, it should be noted, are not essential to my interpretation of the Rep. but only in the nature of a "bonus".) But I must also say that I am not satisfied that Keyt has reconstructed these two arguments fully enough to bring out Plato's reasoning, nor am I satisfied that a confusion of ideal a proper attributes is involved here. Let us look briefly at the "generic" bad argument. Now it is one of Plato's premises in this argument that the Form Intelligible Living Creature is complete in the sense that it includes or contains all kinds of living creatures as species or parts (if we chose one of the parts and thought of it as the Form Living Creature, this Form would be incomplete in the sense that there would be kinds of living creatures that were not parts of it). It is also one of Plato's premises here that such completeness counts as a perfection (it is better for the Demiurge to imitate the complete Form Living Creature than one of the incomplete ones), and that the Demiurge wishes to fashion the sensible world so as to resemble as much as possible this complete Form. Now would he succeed in doing so by fashioning one or two kinds of living creature? Clearly not since he would not be reflecting the whole, complete Form; he would fashion a closer imitation by fashioning a world that contained in it all the different kinds of living creatures that the Form contains. This seems to me to be Plato's reasoning. But what of Keyt's counter example, "One might as well argue that Socrates must contain all species of living creature since he resembles the same Form"? Socrates resembles the same Form very partially, that is by virtue of resembling a species of that Form. Thus if we bring in the two premises I brought in, which are clearly in the text (30c-31a), the counter-example seems to me to be disarmed. A parallel might be imagined with the Form Figure. This Form is complete if and only if it contains or includes in it all the kinds of figures. Now suppose that someone gave us a bunch of clay and asked us to fashion the clay in such a way as to resemble the Form figure as much as possible. Would we do so by just fashioning a square? Clearly not; we would do so if we fashioned all the kinds of figures that are included in the Form, or possibly, somehow, a giant figure that contained all the other kinds of figures. Further, it is not clear to me that the completeness in question is an ideal attribute of the Form; for this completeness, it would seem, would have to be caught or reflected in the definition of it, in which case it would be a proper attribute. The third "bad argument" about uniqueness seems to me to be similarly complicated. The first question we have to ask ourselves is what sort of uniqueness is involved here. It seems to me that it is not the uniqueness that is true of every Form: every Form in Plato is unique in the sense that for every kind (or, for every, at any rate unambiguous, predicate) there is exactly one Form (whereas every Form can have, and usually does, many sensible participants). Now if this uniqueness were involved in the argument as Keyt reconstructs it, the argument would be not only fallacious but disastrous: for parallel arguments in the case of each Form would show that each Form can have only one sensible participant. To avoid this result, we would have to suppose either that it is not just this uniqueness that is involved in the case of Living Creature, or perhaps that the mode of imitation in this case is somehow different. Now the way I read the text it is not this uniqueness that is at issue, but rather the uniqueness of "embracing all intelligible Living Creatures" (31a4)-- the special

completeness of this Form, which its parts do not have (31a4-b2). Now what would it be for the Demiurge to fashion two worlds which resembled this model as completely as possible, i.e. contained in it sensible living creatures of all the kinds included in the Intelligible Living Creature? The two worlds would be indistinguishable, except possibly in the numbers of individual sensibles they contained for each species, a difference not in question since this difference can obtain in our world from, say, year to year. The only way the Demiurge could create relevantly distinguishable worlds is by imitating first a subordinate Form (a "part" of Living Creature) and then another--- but in that case he would not be imitating the right Form (this reasoning is I think implicit in 31a5-8). Finally, Keyt recognizes that "The Form of living creature, the model for the cosmos, is a rather special Form, and the creation of the cosmos a rather special event", and says that one perhaps should not conclude from such a special case that Plato draws no line between the proper and ideal attributes of a Form. To counter this he cites the Parmenides argument. But while this argument seems clearly enough to confuse the two sets of attributes, the only evidence here that Plato made such a confusion is his silence about the argument. This is very weak evidence, I think, in view of the fact that it is Parmenides who gives the argument and Plato has no real interest in defending the view that Forms are thoughts. What is more essential, do we have any evidence that Plato ever made the mistake of supposing that since sensibles participate in the Forms, the sensibles have the ideal attributes of the Forms (a species of which is Keyt's "since Forms are intelligible entities and things share in Forms, each thing is an intelligible entity")? I think none; his whole ontology counts against making such a mistake. The closest he comes is the "eternity argument" discussed above; and here his ontology -- of which the sharp contrasts between Forms and sensibles is a part-- saves him by forcing a distinction between eternity and everlastingness (and this again in the special case of the cosmos).

23. A similar point is brought out by Vlastos in "A Metaphysical Paradox": "Only when Forms assume their other role, as objects of value, and the kind of value Plato claimed for them, would the self-characterization of Forms like Beauty have any point whatever." (p. 56). The notions of Forms as ideal exemplars, self-predication, and the Form of the Good as the formal cause of the being and essence of the Forms-- all these go hand in hand. In so far as Plato gave up non-Pauline self-predication in later dialogues such as the Sophist -- and the prominence of such a Form as Change may have forced him to do it-- he would also be giving up, I think, the theory of the Form of the Good of the Republic. This would begin to account for his silence on the matter in later dialogues. Whether the theory is held in the Philebus seems more difficult to make out.

24. These are relevant to the goodness of the shield since by varying them we can affect how well the shield performs its function.

25. See, e.g. Rep. 479A, 479E, 484B, 485B, 500C, 585BD. In "An Ambiguity in the Sophist" Vlastos finds the same and similar phrases in the Philebus and the Timaeus (pp. 276-77).

26. "The Psychology of Justice in Plato", APQ, April, 1977, p. 154. I am indebted to Cooper not only for his illuminating remarks about the Form of the Good (pp. 154-55), but also for giving me the courage to try to think seriously about this difficult topic. Aside from the

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mathematical interpretation of the Form of the Good, some of Cooper's characterizations do not appear consistent with the superlative goodness of kind of the other Forms (other than the Form of the Good); for example the statement, "Every other good, being good only in some respect or relation or from some point of view, is also not so good, or even quite bad, in some other way." (154) This I think holds only of sensible goods, not the Forms.

27. See, e.g. J. Adam, The Republic of Plato, 2nd Ed. D.A. Rees, (1963), Vol. I¹, pp. 66-67; Cornford, op.cit., pp. 65-66; Ross, op.cit., pp. 54-55.

28. Adam, p. 67, Cornford, pp. 82-83, Ross, pp. 54-56.